

**Amendment to the Claims:**

The following listing of claims replaces all previous versions and listings of claims:

1. (Currently amended) A method for providing automated call acknowledgement services over a communications network, comprising:

receiving a data request from a call-receiving device to acknowledge an incoming call from a calling device;

retrieving a pre-defined acknowledgement message from a database; [[and]]

sending saidthe pre-defined acknowledgement message to saidthe calling device; and

sending the incoming call to a voicemail system of the call-receiving device;

wherein saidthe sending an acknowledgement message to saidthe calling device is implemented in lieu of answering saidthe incoming call.

2. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein saidthe sending an acknowledgement message includes transmitting saidthe pre-defined acknowledgement message in text form.

3. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein saidthe sending an acknowledgement message includes transmitting saidthe pre-defined acknowledgement message in voice form.

4. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein saidthe pre-defined acknowledgement message is created by a user of saidthe automated call acknowledgement services.

5. (Currently amended) The method of claim 3, further comprising creating a call request, saidthe call request including:

a phone number for a calling party;

a phone number for saidthe call-receiving device; and

saidthe pre-defined acknowledgement message converted into voice format.

6. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

storing a phone number for a calling party device;

storing a text address of saidthe calling party device; and

mapping saidthe phone number for saidthe calling party device to saidthe text address of saidthe calling party device operable for selecting a mode of transmission for saidthe pre-defined acknowledgement message.

7. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

storing a message type;

storing a pre-defined acknowledgement message; and

mapping saidthe message type to saidthe pre-defined acknowledgement message operable for linking pre-defined acknowledgement messages to message types displayed on saidthe call-receiving device and retrieving associated pre-defined acknowledgement messages from storage for transmission to saidthe calling device.

8. (Currently amended) A system for providing automated call acknowledgement services over a communications network, comprising:

a call-receiving device receiving a call from a calling device;

an automated call acknowledgement service executing on a server, saidthe automated call acknowledgement service in communication with saidthe call-receiving device and saidthe calling device;

a data request; and

a pre-defined acknowledgement message generated by saidthe automated call acknowledgement service;

wherein saidthe pre-defined acknowledgement message is sent to saidthe calling device in lieu of answering saidthe incoming call, and the call is sent to a voicemail system of the call-receiving device.

9. (Currently amended) The system of claim 8, further comprising:

a calling customer profile database in communication with saidthe automated call acknowledgement service, saidthe calling customer profile database storing:

text addresses for calling parties; and

phone numbers for calling parties, saidthe phone numbers mapped to corresponding text addresses.

10. (Currently amended) The system of claim 8, further comprising:

a called customer profile database in communication with saidthe automated call acknowledgement service, saidthe called customer profile database storing:

personal data of call-receiving parties associated with saidthe call-receiving devices, saidthe personal data including phone numbers of saidthe call-receiving parties; and

pre-defined acknowledgement messages associated with message type options, saidthe pre-defined acknowledgement messages mapped to corresponding message type options.

11. (Currently amended) The system of claim 8, wherein saidthe voice/text indicator selection includes an option operable for sending an acknowledgement message in at least one of a voice format and a text format, saidthe voice/text indicator selection being selectable by a user on saidthe call-receiving device.

12. (Original) The system of claim 8, further comprising a call request operable for initiating a text-to-voice conversion of a pre-defined acknowledgement message.

13. (Currently amended) The system of claim 12, wherein ~~said~~the call request includes a delay field operable for preventing premature ~~placing transmission of~~ [[a]] the pre-defined acknowledgement message eall-to the calling device to allow time for a caller of the calling device to complete a voicemail message at the voicemail system of the call-receiving device~~an originator of said incoming call.~~

14. (Currently amended) A storage medium encoded with machine-readable computer program code for providing automated call acknowledgement services over a communications network, ~~said~~the storage medium including instructions for causing a computer to implement a method, comprising:

receiving a data request from a call-receiving device to acknowledge an incoming call from a calling device;

retrieving a pre-defined acknowledgement message from a database; ~~[[and]]~~

sending ~~said~~the pre-defined acknowledgement message to ~~said~~the calling device; and  
sending the incoming call to a voicemail system of the call-receiving device;

wherein ~~said~~the sending an acknowledgement message to ~~said~~the calling device is implemented in lieu of answering ~~said~~the incoming call.

15. (Currently amended) The storage medium of claim 14, wherein ~~said~~the sending an acknowledgement message includes transmitting ~~said~~the pre-defined acknowledgement message in text form.

16. (Currently amended) The storage medium of claim 14, wherein ~~said~~the sending an acknowledgement message includes transmitting ~~said~~the pre-defined acknowledgement message in voice form.

17. (Currently amended) The storage medium of claim 14, wherein ~~said~~the pre-defined acknowledgement message is created by a user of ~~said~~the automated call acknowledgement services.

18. (Currently amended) The storage medium of claim 16, further comprising instructions for causing saidthe computer to create a call request, saidthe call request including:

a phone number for a calling party;

a phone number for saidthe call-receiving device; and

saidthe pre-defined acknowledgement message converted into voice format.

19. (Currently amended) The storage medium of claim 14, further comprising instructions for causing saidthe computer to implement:

storing a phone number for a calling party device;

storing a text address of saidthe calling party device; and

mapping saidthe phone number for saidthe calling party device to saidthe text address of saidthe calling party device operable for selecting a mode of transmission for saidthe pre-defined acknowledgement message.

20. (Currently amended) The storage medium of claim 14, further comprising instructions for causing saidthe computer to implement:

storing a message type;

storing a pre-defined acknowledgement message; and

mapping saidthe message type to saidthe pre-defined acknowledgement message operable for linking pre-defined acknowledgement messages to message types displayed on saidthe call-receiving device and retrieving associated pre-defined acknowledgement messages from storage for transmission to saidthe calling device.

21. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein saidthe data request includes:

a phone number for saidthe call-receiving device;

at least one of a phone number and text address for saidthe calling device;

a message type; and

a voice/text indicator selection.

22. (Currently amended) The system of claim 8, wherein saidthe data request includes:

a phone number for saidthe call-receiving device;

at least one of a phone number and text address for saidthe calling device;

a message type; and

a voice/text indicator selection.

23. (Currently amended) The storage medium of claim 14, wherein saidthe data request includes:

a phone number for saidthe call-receiving device;

at least one of a phone number and text address for saidthe calling device;

a message type; and

a voice/text indicator selection.